For Internal Circulation Only

Buddhist and Pali College of Singapore Alumni (BPCA) E-Bulletin

Jan – Apr 2025

In this issue, we bring you a vibrant mix of highlights and memorable moments from recent events and activities! Here's what you can look forward to:

1. **Chinese New Year Bonding Activity**

   Catch a glimpse of the festive fun as students joined hands with teachers and peers from other classes to celebrate Chinese New Year. Teamwork, laughter, and lots of good vibes filled the air!

2. **Trip to Angkor, UNESCO World Heritage Sites**

   Embark on a virtual educational tour to Angkor! Marvel at the awe-inspiring art and architecture of ancient Angkor, and see how nature and ancient temples intertwine in stunning harmony.

3. **Cultural Tour: Buddhist Temples & Singapore Jain Religious Society**

   Written in Chinese, this article takes you on a journey through three Buddhist temples representing different traditions, and offers a glimpse into the Singapore Jain Religious Society.

4. **Sri Lankan and Myanmar New Year Celebration**

   Learn to say Happy New Year in Sinhala and Burmese and the symbolism of the “Spilling of Milk” ritual!

If you/your BPC alumni friend would like to contribute an article to the e-Bulletin, please drop Sister Tyy Yn an email at tyyynquek@gmail.com.

May all be well, happy and peaceful!

The Editorial Team
BPCA Alumni Committee
30 Jalan Eunos, Singapore 419495

Chinese New Year Bonding 2025

9 Feb 2025

Event Highlights:

- Lohei!
- Interaction with BPC Principal and lecturers
- Getting to know one another from different classes
- Learning about the Buddha's teachings from art and architecture in MV
- Learning about the history of MV and BPC
- Creative depiction of the spirit of this Chinese New Year bonding activity

Opening Address by Principal Ven P Seelananda

年年有余 - Abundance and surplus throughout the year.

Working on the Quiz

Letting the creative juice flow!

Angkor, UNESCO World Heritage Site

22 to 26 Feb 2025

By Sis Yeo Sock Hwa

Organised by Buddhist and Pali College Alumni Singapore
Spiritual Adviser: Bhante Seelananda, Mangala Vihara

START OF TRIP

Changi Airport Departure Hall

Everyone was ready for the trip to the Angkor Archaeological Park in Siem Reap Province in northern Cambodia. The Park includes Angkor Wat, Angkor Thom (Bayon), Preah Khan Temple, Ta Prohm Temple, other lesser known temples, collectively designated as UNESCO World Heritage Site. Angkor served as the center of the Khmer Empire (9th century to 15th century), and is known for its architectural and artistic skills, social order and its once advanced hydraulic system consisting of a vast network of reservoirs, canals and moats, reflecting the engineering skills of the ancient Khmers.

SIEM REAP ANGKOR INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Aerial views of the areas near the Siem Reap Angkor International Airport, as we approached and landed at the newly built Airport which was opened in October 2023.

MEALS OF THE TRIP

Bhante Seelananda blessed our meals at every lunch of the trip and conducted puja in the bus every morning at the start of every tour. Bhante does not take food after 12 pm, so we missed him at dinners.

CHEERFUL HOUSE

We had many of our vegetarian lunches and dinners in this eatery. They prepared different types of vegetables, mushrooms and other vegetarian ingredients cooked in differing styles. We even had a vegetarian hot pot for our last dinner at the eatery. They were impressively well done and tasty.

More places where we had our meals.

POR CUISINE DINNER WITH APSARA SHOW

On our first night in Siem Reap, we had dinner in this restaurant that serves a fusion of Khmer, Asian and international cuisine. We had good food and enjoyed the Aspara Dance, a traditional Khmer classical dance that narrates religious stories and myths, symbolizes spirituality, and is known for its graceful, intricate hand gestures.

THE TWIZT LIFESTYLE HOSTEL & HOTEL

Picture from Twizt website

The hotel where we stayed for the trip. Comfortable and cozy, it is also within walking distance from the Siem Reap city centre, where typically, one may go to for food, drinks, hangouts, music and shopping, of course 😄. Breakfasts were provided by the hotel every morning.

PLACES VISITED

TONLE SAP LAKE

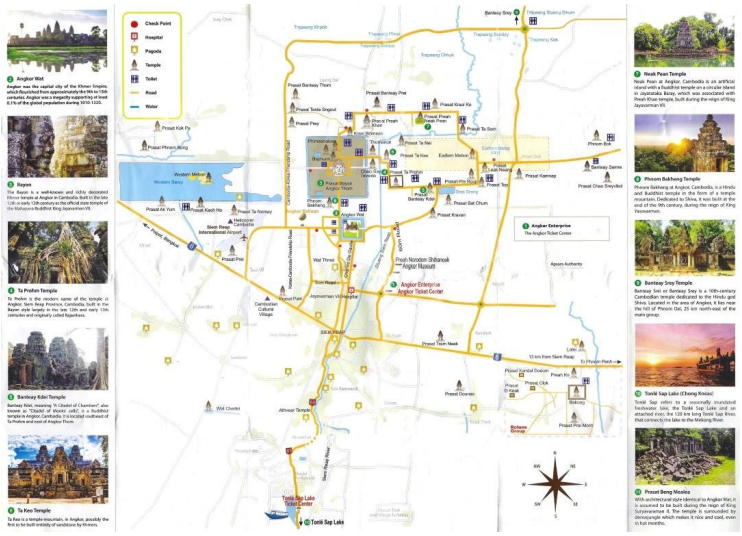
Tonle Sap is a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve (1997), known for its unique wetland and rich biodiversity. It is the largest freshwater lake in Southeast Asia and is a part of the Mekong River System.

It was an interesting cruise for us, seeing how the inhabitants conduct their daily lives, complete with floating residences, boat restaurants, grocery stores, recreation facilities, places of worship and gardens - all activities taking place on the lake itself.

ARTISANS D'ANGKOR

It housed the skilled craft-persons, from weavers, carvers, painters to farmers rearing silkworms, using traditional Khmer techniques and skills. We could buy crafted pieces, paintings, woven clothes, bags, tablecloths etc. In other words, the start of shopping for everyone.

ANGKOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL PARK



Map of Angkor Archaeological Park
(Provided by Ik Chin Travel)

BRIEF HISTORY

The Khmer Empire started in the early 9th century and declined in the 15th century. Angkor (in Khmer) or Yasodharapura (in Sanskrit) was the Empire's most famous capital city. Hinduism was originally the main religion practised by the ancient Khmer Empire and many temples were built by the Khmer Kings, dedicated to Hindu deities, including Lord Shiva and later, Lord Vishnu. Temples became impressive pyramids to represent Mount Meru, the home of the Hindu gods, and the moats surrounding the temples represent the mythological oceans. Buddhism was introduced towards the end of the 12th century. Buddhist sculptures and carvings were incorporated into some of the temples and Buddhist temples were also built. The temples in Angkor are often described as Hindu-Buddhist.

There are over a thousand temples in Angkor, ranging from small structures to ones as large as Angkor Wat, which is said to be the world's

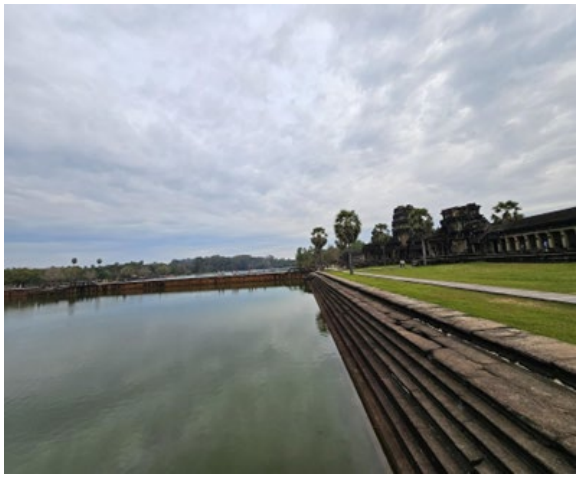
largest religious monument. During the decline of the Khmer Empire, many parts of the Angkor temple complex were abandoned, as the inhabitants moved south. Most of the temples were left unattended and the jungles around the premises reclaimed the buildings and structures. The architectural and engineering feats of the ancient Khmer were forgotten. Original Khmer records were written on perishable materials and have since disappeared. Much information about the ancient Khmer is collected from stone inscriptions, temple wall reliefs and accounts by a Chinese official, Zhou Daguan, who visited Angkor in the 13th century. The first European recorded account was from a Portuguese explorer, Mr Antonio da Madalena in the 16th century. The most famous explorer and researcher who uncovered the sites was a Frenchman, Mr Henri Mouhot. It was only in 1908, that formal conservation efforts started. Archaeological finds have also helped to theorize why the inhabitants of Angkor had packed up and left behind the sites of an advanced civilisation.

ANGKOR WAT

Aerial view of Angkor Wat
- Image from Britannica

Angkor Wat was commissioned by King Suryavarman II at the beginning of the 12th century as a Hindu temple dedicated to the Hindu god, Lord Vishnu, and became a Buddhist temple during the reign of King Jayavarman VII at the end of the 12th century.

It is surrounded by a large moat, 200 meters wide, representing the cosmic ocean.



A sandstone bridge runs over the moat and is an entrance into the Angkor Wat Complex. As we walked along the bridge, we could feel the largeness of the temple ground.

After passing over the moat, we continued to walk toward the iconic towers of Angkor Wat. We could feel the magnificence of this temple monument. Looking back to the 12th century, we pictured in our minds how glorious, intricate, and beautiful it must have once been.

Along the way, we saw two libraries, one on each side of the walkway. They are now empty shells.

Climbing up the main tower in Angkor Wat was challenging. We could not help but wonder how the ancient Khmers did it without the advanced technologies that we have today?

Bakan, Central Tower of Angkor Wat

Wonderful people at a wonderful place.

ANGKOR THOM

Angkor Thom was built by King Jayavarman VII at the end of the 12th century. The King had adopted Mahayana Buddhism and constructed the Buddhist temple at The Bayon at the heart of Angkor Thom, which became the capital city centre.

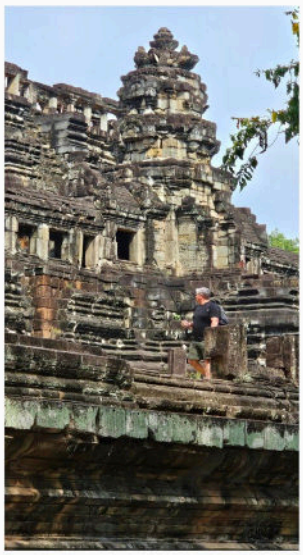
TONLE OM SOUTH GATE BRIDGE & ANCIENT STONE FACE CARVINGS AT GATE ENTRANCE TO ANGKOR THOM

THE BAYON

Bayon is known for its distinctive face towers—massive stone faces carved into 54 towers, thought to represent either King Jayavarman VII (who commissioned it) or the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara, symbolizing compassion.

PALACE OF PRIMEANAKAS

The celestial temple was started by King Rajendravarman II (944-969 BCE), dedicated to Lord Shiva and was used by the royal family.



BAPHUON IN ANGKOR THOM

Hindu-Buddhist Temple built in the 11th century.

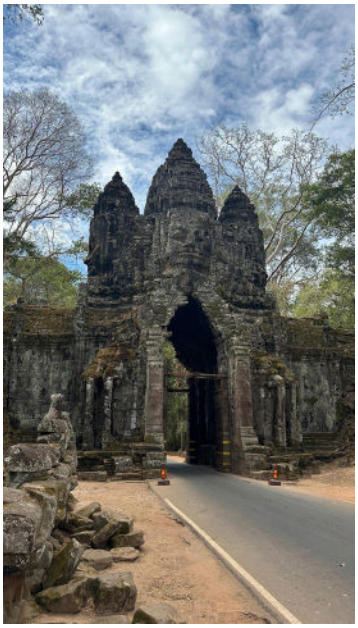
TERRACE OF THE ELEPHANTS

The platform from which King Jayavarman VII viewed his victorious returning army.
It was originally attached to the palace of Primeanakas, but most of the original structures have disappeared.

TERRACE OF THE LEPER KING

The site was believed to be a royal cremation site and featured a statue depicting Yama, the Hindu god of death. The statue is now in the National Museum in Phnom Penh.

NORTH GATE OF ANGKOR THOM



TA PROHM

TA PROHM was a Buddhist monastery and university built in the early 13th century and dedicated to the mother of King Jayavarman VII. It is famous for the way the giant trees' roots intertwine with the stone structures as nature reclaims the place. One wonders whether the stone structures were holding up the trees or the trees holding the stonework together.

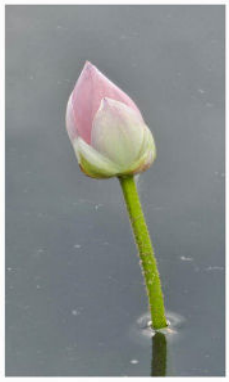
PREAH KHAN TEMPLE (“Sacred Sword”)

This temple complex was built by King Jayavarman VII and dedicated to his father. Shrines dedicated to Vishnu and Shiva are also in the Buddhist temple, showing King Jayavarman VII’s continued inclusiveness in supporting Hindu tradition.

A stupa stood where it used to be a beautiful statue of Lokesvara (Avalokitesvara), the Bodhisattva, sculpted in the image of King Jayavarman VII’s father.
[See bottom left photo.]

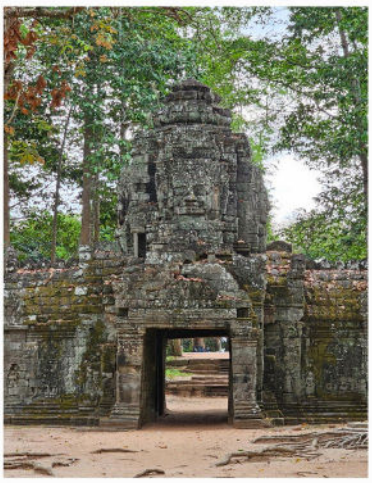
NEAK POAN TEMPLE

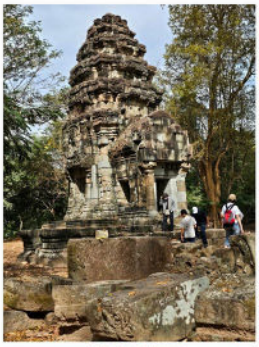
The temple is built in the middle of a lake. To reach the temple site, we had to walk on a boardwalk through lotus ponds.

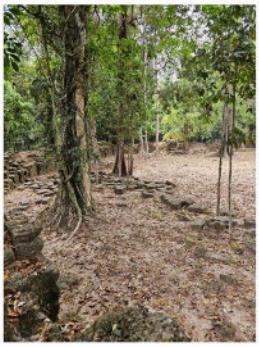


TA SOM TEMPLE

This is a small temple located to the northeast of Angkor Thom and east of Neak Poan Temple. It was also believed to be built by King Jayavarman VII, dedicated to his father.



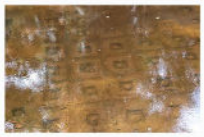




TONLE SNGUOT TEMPLE

This is a small sandstone temple housing an ancient hospital and library.

THE PHNOM KULEN NATIONAL PARK



River of a Thousand Lingas (Kbal Spean)

There are carvings of Hindu gods, including Lord Vishnu, and over a thousand lingas in the riverbed.

There are two waterfalls in the Park. Unfortunately, the water level was low when we were there. But it was wonderful and fortunate that we sighted a HALO around the sun in the sky.

WAT PREAH ANG THOM PHNOM KULEN

At this Thai Temple, we had a puja and made offering of lotus flowers.

BENG MEALEA TEMPLE

It is nestled deep in the lush jungles of northern Cambodia, in Beng Mealea Village, about 77 km northwest of Siem Reap town. The temple was Hindu-Buddhist, built by King Suryavarman II and modified by King Jayavarman VII.

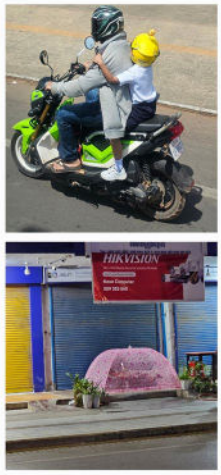
Primarily built of sandstone, it is largely unrestored. It seems that there are extensive carvings of scenes from Hindu mythologies, including Lord Vishnu, Garuda and Churning of the Sea of Milk. However, due to the unrestored ruins, it was difficult for us to see the details of the carvings. It must have been magnificent and beautiful in its heyday.

STORY OF CHURNING OF THE OCEAN OF MILK is a mythological tale in Hinduism and in Cambodian culture.

In Hinduism, it represents the eternal struggle between good [gods (devas)] and evil [demons (asuras)] working together to churn the ocean and produce the elixir of life, amrita.

In Khmer mythology, the churning of the ocean is said to create the mountains, rivers and Kambuja and the gods and goddesses involved are revered as ancestors of the Khmer people. The depiction of the Churning of the Ocean of Milk in Angkor Wat is considered one of the most impressive examples of Khmer art and architecture.

OTHER ACTIVITIES



As days go by … As nights go by … As visitors go by …

DEPARTURE

Soon, it was time to leave this place of a rich, historic and ancient past - much of its history was still in mystery and being researched. There is much to learn and understand about the ancient Buddhism mixed with Hinduism that Angkor adopted and lived by. Archaeological digs, conservation and restoration works are massive projects, but it allows the Cambodians and us to learn, explain and understand the ancient civilisation and culture, and apply the lessons to the present.

We are fortunate and blessed to have an enjoyable learning experience from the Trip. We are thankful to Ven. Seelananda for his blessings and guidance. May all be well and happy.

SADHU! SADHU! SADHU!

SOURCES:
Images & information contributed by members of the trip & the tour guides, and from Wikipedia, Britannica & Google Art & Culture.

Temples Tour

For Diploma in Buddhism Students

16 Mar 2025

Lian Shan Shuang Lin Monastery

- Started in 1898, completed in 1909
- Funded, including land donation, by Mr Low Kim Pong from Zhangzhou, Fujian, China
- First abbot: Ven Xian Hui

Burmese Buddhist Temple

- Founded in 1875 by a Burmese gentleman, U Thar Hnin.
- It is the first and only Burmese Buddhist temple built outside of Burma (Myanmar) in the traditional style.

Karma Kagyud Buddhist Centre

- Established in 1981 by His Holiness the 16th Gyalwa Karmapa
- Kagyud tradition (Oral transmission)

Singapore Jain Religious Society

- Formed and registered in 1972
- The current location started in 1978 and the building was constructed in 1995

多元宗教建筑中的法界观照：
新加坡佛学与巴利文院学生一日参访四圣地启示录

16 Mar 2025

文：李冬

乙巳年仲春（3 月 16 日），新加坡佛学与巴利文学院佛学中文文凭班与部分英文班学众首启殊缘，于一日间遍访狮城四座宗教圣地——莲山双林寺、缅甸玉佛寺、噶玛迦如佛教中心与耆那教静修中心。此次参学由学院老师与学生会统筹，学生会会长与成员、明圆法师及两位老师全程引领，众学子手持精研问卷，乘专车开启文化寻根之旅。 每到一处均受到了工作人员的热情招待和详细讲解！

首至莲山双林寺，唐宋遗韵与禅宗法脉的南洋传承！作为新加坡最古老的汉传佛教寺庙，莲山双林寺始建于 1902 年，由中国福建高僧与新加坡先辈募建。其名“双林”源自佛陀涅槃的娑罗双树，而“莲山”则暗喻净土信仰。寺庙严格遵循唐宋寺院的中轴线布局，山门、天王殿、大雄宝殿层层递进，飞檐翘角上的琉璃瓦与雕花梁枋尽显东方建筑美学。为了让同学们有很好的观感体验特意允许进入正在修缮中的大雄宝殿，殿内供奉的释迦牟尼佛像以唐代风格塑造，衣纹流畅、面容沉静；殿外回廊镌刻的梵文经咒与“国音演妙法宏阁梵字”匾额，则见证着显密交融的独特传统。

次访缅甸玉佛寺：金色佛塔下的南传佛教实践。坐落于马里士他大进路的缅甸玉佛寺是新加坡南传佛教的道场之一。纯白色的寺墙与鎏金佛塔构成鲜明视觉符号，塔顶缀满铃铎，随风轻响如诵经声。主殿内供奉的缅甸风格白玉佛像，右手触地印庄严慈悲，体现佛陀证悟时的瞬间。寺中每日举行的巴利语诵经与不定期举行的托钵仪式 和僧侣赤足行禅的传统，让学生直观感受到南传佛教“严守戒律、注重实修”的特质。

再入噶玛迦如佛教中心，位于闹市区的噶玛迦如佛教中心（Karma Kagyud Buddhist Centre），属于藏传佛教噶举派分支。步入其中，唐卡壁画中的忿怒尊与寂静尊交织出密宗特有的神秘氛围，曼陀罗坛城与转经筒的布置则暗含“即身成佛”的密续哲学。中心定期举办灌顶法会、金刚舞仪轨，并设有现代禅堂供都市人修习大手印禅法。对佛学生而言，此处参访打破了他们对密宗的刻板印象。中心将传统仪轨与英语开示结合，用心理学概念诠释“五毒烦恼”，展现出藏传佛教在当代社会的适应性。

最后耆那教中心：非暴力哲学与极致简朴的震撼。耆那教并非佛教分支，但其与佛教同属沙门思潮，且教义有诸多相通之处，信徒严格遵循“不杀生”戒律，甚至佩戴口罩以防吸入微生物。讲解员阐释的“三宝”（正知、正见、正行）与“七谛说”，让学生联想到佛教的“四圣谛”，但耆那教对“业力”更为严苛的解析——如强调每一念皆造业，则促使我们重新审视佛教“中道”思想的实践意义。

四座宗教场所的参访，恰似一堂生动的比较宗教学课程。莲山双林寺的历史厚重感、缅甸玉佛寺的戒律实践、噶玛迦如的密法诠释、耆那教的伦理极致，共同勾勒出亚洲宗教的多元光谱。对佛学生而言，此行最深刻的启发在于：佛陀“八万四千法门”的譬喻，不仅是教义差异的隐喻，更是对众生根器不同的慈悲包容。多元参访的启示：破除我执，广学多闻 ！同时也再次感叹：新加坡真是多元共生的修行净土！

新加坡，这座赤道明珠，恰似佛经中所述的“华藏世界微尘境”——方寸之地汇聚汉传伽蓝、南传金塔、藏密坛城与耆那白殿，多元文明在此交融和传承！鳞次栉比的都市天际线下，晨钟暮鼓与梵呗, 清音交响，钢筋丛林间暗藏二十余种宗教道场，以海纳百川的胸襟诠释着“法门无量誓愿学”的真谛。

Sri Lankan and Myanmar New Year Celebration

13 Apr 2025

With the support of Mangala Vihara Management Committee, the Buddhist and Pali College Alumni Committee, together with the Sunday Dhamma School teachers, students and their families, celebrated the Sri Lankan New Year and Myanmar New Year (Thingyan) in advance, on 13 April 2025.

Happy Solar New Year!

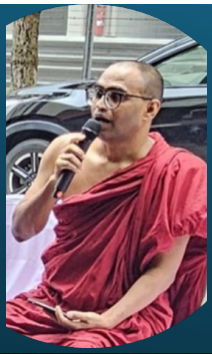
Sinhala:
Subha Aluth Awruddak Wewa!

Burmese:
Nhait U Thin Gian Mhar Pwar Shwin Par Say

Dhamma Sharing on Solar New Year by Ven Cakkapala

The Spilling of Milk (*Kiri Ithirawīma*)

In Sri Lankan tradition, at the dawn of the new year, fresh milk is boiled in a clay pot till it overflows. This signifies prosperity, abundance and good fortune in the coming year.
In the Buddhist perspective, it signifies the cultivation of the mind to overflow with purity.



Sharing of the Sri Lankan tradition and new year wishes by Ven Seelananda

Upcoming Trip

6D Borobudur Trip
22 to 27 August 2025

Organized by: Buddhist & Pali College Alumni

Trip Highlights

MAGELANG

Mendut Temple
Pawon Temple
Sunrise view at Dagi Abhinaya
Borobudur Temple
Prambanan Temple
Sewu Temple

CENTRAL JAVA

Mt. Merapi Lava Tour

YOGYAKARTA CITY

Sultan Palace
Sambisari Temple
Plaosan Temple
Obelix Sea View
Parangtritis Beach jeep tour

Twin: Sgd $1,398/-
Single: Sgd $1,778/-

Scoot Flight Details

22AUG (FRI) 8.15am Departure Singapore
27AUG (WED) 10.30am Departure Yogyakarta

Registration closing date:
First week of June
Further enquiry:
Brother Adrian (90225585)

- Prices subject to air ticket fluctuation
- Subject to capacity and first come first serve basis
- Itinerary subject to change
- All vegetarian meals

Upcoming Courses

Introduction to Buddhism Course

July 2025 (29th Intake)

* How much do you know about Buddhism?
* Are you a knowledgeable Buddhist?
* What is the essence of Buddhism?
* Do you know how to practise Buddhism?

Course Details:

Course Date	: 30th July to 1st Oct 2025 (10 lessons)
Frequency	: Every Wednesday 7.30pm to 9.30pm
Venue	: Mangala Vihara Buddhist Temple 30 Jalan Eunos, S'pore 419495 (Opposite Eunos MRT)
Course Fees	: By donation
Email	: Intro2buddhismbpca@gmail.com
Tel	: Sis. Lynn @ 8288 9888
Instructors	: By experienced Dhamma Teachers

Topics are covered in plain and simple language and include:

The Freedom of Inquiry in Buddhism, the Life of the Buddha, the 3 Characteristics of Existence, the 4 Noble Truths and the Noble 8 Fold Path, Rebirth and Kamma, the Buddhist Texts, How to Practise Buddhism, the Different Buddhist Traditions, the Meaning of Common Buddhist Rituals and Chanting, Buddhist Meditation.

Organized by the Buddhist & Pali College of Singapore

Not authorised for hard copy print and distribution

Upcoming Courses

School Calendar

Class Commencement Date:	
New Diploma Class @Mangala Vihara (MV):	6 October 2024 @ 2.00pm
New Diploma Class @Poh Ming Tse (PMT):	8 October 2024 @ 7.30pm
New Diploma Class in **Chinese**:	5 January 2025
Degree Classes:	5 January 2025
Holidays:	
Year End break for **Diploma Classes**:	**25 Nov 2024 to 4 Jan 2025**
Chinese New Year (*29 to 30 Jan 2025*):	25 Jan to 8 February 2025
Good Friday (Diploma-PMT):	18 April 2025 (Friday)
Labour Day:	1 May 2025 (Thursday)
Vesak Day (*12 May 2025*):	6 May to 19 May 2025
Study Leave/Combined Revision:	
Diploma *Combined Revision* (English):	7 September 2025 (tbc)
Diploma *Study Leave* (English & Chinese):	9 September 2025
Degree *Study Leave*:	12 October 2025
Examination (*to be confirmed*):	
Diploma (English & Chinese):	18 to 20 October 2025 (tbc)
Degree:	1st two weeks of December 2025

Other Events and Courses

- 7 Jun: Founders' Memorial Day